



T O A L L O F F I C E R S
OF ALL ORGANISATIONS, ASSOCIATIONS, CORPORATIONS, AND PRIVATE FIRMS

who intend to use in their activities and business

PICTORIAL SYMBOLS

which can be read and understood in all languages

An Appeal by C.K. Bliss B.Sc.

Author and Inventor of Semantography (Blissymbolics)

Different organisations are proposing different symbols for the same meanings. Should we create a new Babel? Allow me then - a man who has worked solely on symbols for the last 24 years - to appeal to you.

A Lesson from History.

Before 1855 the ships of different nations used different flag symbols - with tragic results. In 1855 the London Board of Trade introduced an improved new code for British shipping only. Quietly all other nations adopted it - without conferences and counter-proposals. Can we repeat this historic move? Yes - provided we recognise some false beliefs about symbols.

Instant Understanding without Learning - a Fallacy

Usually pictorial symbols are displayed with a word underneath. People read the word in a glance - and suddenly believe that the symbol is instantly "self-explanatory." But usually it isn't. Just imagine that the word underneath is in Greek, or Cyrillic, or Arabic letters, or in the Latin letters of a language we don't understand. Some designers believe they can design symbols which are instantly understood - without a millisecond of learning. This can be done with the arrow symbol - because we have learned its meaning before. But with most other symbols - they must be learned.

Pictures without Explanation - another Fallacy.

Another false belief is that pictures need no explanation in words underneath. What does the picture of an airplane mean? Some want it to mean AIRPORT, others DEPARTURES, and others ATTENTION! LOW FLYING AIRCRAFT OVERHEAD! Experiments with intelligent people of modern cities have shown that pictures convey different meanings to different people.

Picturegraphs of present Things - or timeless Symbols.

Technology changes fast, and so do the outlines of machines and tools. 20 years ago, the picturegraph of an airplane would show straight wings and a propeller. Today's designs show no propeller and backswept wings. 20 years from now, supersonic aircraft will show no wings but a detashaped fuselage. Present-day's designs would look as outdated as a smoke-puffing locomotive on Europe's railway crossings. We need pictorial symbols which are timeless, like the outline of a bird's wings (see semantographic symbol).

How many Symbols have been proposed so far?

Not more than 30 to 60 symbols. And some of them are not pictorial, but abstract, or arbitrary, or contradictory. Why not more symbols? International travellers, importers and exporters need thousands of symbols. The reason is that it is very difficult to invent designs for abstract or complex meanings as for CUSTOMS, CANCELLATION, INSURANCE COUNTER, NO RESPONSIBILITY FOR VALUABLES LEFT IN THE HOTEL ROOM, and many more.

But can we form thousands of pictorial Symbols?

Yes, if we reduce the words of all languages to basic pictorial components. I am an industrial research chemist who has applied scientific analytical reasoning to words. I have separated the "elements of meaning", symbolised by not more than about 100 symbols, of which 30 are already internationally used (see the attached folder). With these pictorial simple symbols we can - in combination - symbolize all meanings needed in international tourism, communication, commerce, industry, and even science. The same symbol for the same meaning can be used in motorcars and motorroads, in aircraft and airports, in railways and ships, in hotels and restaurants (yes, even a pictorial menucard, as shown in the attached tourist folder), in passports and travel tickets, in directions on machines and foodtins, in anything anywhere where the language barrier must be bridged. Moreover, my symbols can be printed and typed on a normal-sized typewriter, which carries the alphabet too. I have proved this in my book Semantography Blissymbolics (see below).

But aren't these pictorial symbols difficult to "learn"?

On the contrary, as you can see from page 2 of the attached folder. Educators have found that children grasp them within the first hour, and write whole sentences and letters to each other. Please study the attached folder Universal Pictorial Blissymbols for the International Traveller. It contains about 350 meanings, and you can quickly combine the elements to many more meanings PROVIDED YOU DON'T GLANCE HERE AND THERE TRYING TO GUESS THE MEANINGS "RIGHT AWAY" WITHOUT A MILLISECOND "LEARNING." Go from line to line, from page to page, and see how simple the symbols really are.

How to introduce these new Symbols to the international Traveller?

Every tourist will get a folder showing in a vertical column the basic symbols and the combinations he will encounter on his voyage - and in adjacent vertical columns the respective words in say 10 languages or more. Experiments have proved that people can guess the meaning of new combinations they have never seen before. Travel guide books will show the basic symbols and their most important combinations, in the same way as they show today the road warning signs of countries. But what shall be done with the symbols already displayed?

Nothing. They serve their purpose, and may do so until they wear out. Then the public will be informed by notices of the change-over to the new symbols. During the last 50 years many road symbols have been changed smoothly.

Can we repeat the historic World Unification in flag symbols of 1855?

Yes we can - if we exclude psychology and jealousy from our consideration for world unity. In 1855 all other nations recognised the better British symbol code and adopted it. We can repeat this, if we realise that it may be utterly frustrating for a would-be symbol designer to learn that someone in far-away down-under Australia has done the job already. Some of them diminish and dismiss my work, suppress the knowledge of it, and wish me dead. Others have turned my word Semantography into a general term for all the "semantographies" - yet to come. This forced me to revert to the term of Blissymbolics which they cannot pervert. They have caused me misery and agony. Great scholars have praised my work. But I am over 69 now, and can't last much longer. Should all my knowledge and all my experience get lost through my death?

How can we ensure World Unity?

By using my registered pioneer copyrights which have wide legal interpretation covering also derivations, deviations and other imitations. I am ready to give my copyrights to the United Nations, or to one great country which has the means to introduce it to the whole world for the benefit of all humanity.

What do we need now?

Nothing but co-operation - without jealousy. Use me now! Don't wait until I am dead. Don't create a new Babel! And thanks for reading this.

The book Semantography-Blissymbolics will be sent to your library for \$9.00 by the distributor ACME CODE COMPANY 102 First Street, Hackensack, N.J. 07601, U.S.A.

Yours sincerely,
C.K. Bliss
C.K. Bliss, B. Sc.